

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO USDOC WASHDC

SECSTATE WASHDC 8738

AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMCONSUL ORAN

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMCONSUL TANGIER

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 4756

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP SY

SUBJ: FY 78 USDOC/CAGNE TRADE PROMOTION PROGRAM

REF: STATE 136618

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1. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS FOLLOWING USDOC/CAGNE TRADE PROMOTION EVENTS FOR SYRIA DURING FY 78:

2. DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL FAIR, JULY 25-AUGUST 20, 1978. US RESUMED EXHIBITING IN DAMASCUS FAIR IN 1974; 1975 US PARTICIPANTS REPORTED MORE THAN 4 MILLION DOLLARS OFF-THE-FLOOR SALES, AND 1976 EFFORT (CURRENTLY UNDERWAY WITH 20 US FIRMS PARTICIPATING) PROMISES AT LEAST EQUALLY GOOD RESULTS. WE PRESUME US WILL PARTICIPATE IN 1977 FAIR AND RECOMMEND SUCH PARTICIPATION BE CONTINUED IN 1978. WE WILL PRESENT OUR FULL RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REGARD AT CONCLUSION OF 1976 FAIR. HOWEVER, HAVING BEEN INFORMALLY INFORMED BY USDOC THAT COMMERCIAL PRESENCE FAIRS (CPF'S) WERE DROPPED FROM FY 77 USDOC BUDGET, WE NEED USDOC COMMENTS SOONEST RE CPF PLANS FOR FY 77 AND 78. UPON RECEIPT OF SUCH GUIDANCE, WE CAN BETTER PREPARE OUR FULL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PARTICIPATION IN FAIR.

3. TRADE MISSIONS: SINCE EMBASSY REOPENED IN JUNE 1974, THERE HAVE BEEN FOUR US TRADE MISSIONS TO SYRIA: RAILWAY EQUIPMENT, TEXTILE MACHINERY, AND MARYLAND AND INDIANA IOGAS. EACH HAS BEEN WARMLY RECEIVED BY SARG OFFICIALS AND LOCAL BUSINESSMEN. CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE RECOMMENDED THE FOLLOWING THEMES FOR FUTURE US TRADE MISSIONS TO SYRIA (BASED ON SYRIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TO BE OUTLINED IN STILL-UNPUBLISHED FOURTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN - 1976-1980): PETROLEUM AND PETROCHEMICALS, IRRIGATION AND LAND RECLAMATION AND DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING AND URBAN PLANNING, MATERIALS HANDLING, TOURISM AND HOTELS, MINING EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES, AND FOOD PROCESSING AND PRESERVATION. FOREIGN FIRMS ABLE TO OFFER FINANCING GENERALLY HAVE INSIDE TRACK ON PROJECTS. MARYLAND AND INDIANA IOGAS INCLUDED BANKERS READY TO DISCUSS SUCH FINANCING, AND EMBASSY SUGGESTS FUTURE USDOC TRADE MISSIONS AND IOGAS INCLUDE BANKING REPRESENTATIVES.

4. TECHNICAL TRADE SEMINARS: TO DATE THERE HAVE BEEN NO SUCH US-SPONSORED SEMINARS IN SYRIA, EXCEPT FOR A UNCLASSIFIED

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SUCCESSFUL ONE-DAY SEMINAR ON THE USE OF SOYBEAN MEAL FOR POULTRY RATIONS SPONSORED BY USDA AND THE AMERICAN SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION IN JUNE 1976. WE BELIEVE SUCH SEMINARS OFFER A PROMISING FORUM BY WHICH AMERICAN EXPERTS COULD NOT ONLY INTRODUCE NEW US PRODUCTS AND SERVICES BUT COULD MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO SYRIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING. (FOR EXAMPLE, A SYRIAN TENDER FOR AN AUTOMATED CONTROL SYSTEM FOR THE RUMEILAN

OILFIELDS -- IN WHICH A NUMBER OF US FIRMS WERE INTERESTED -- WAS DROPPED BECAUSE THE SYRIAN PLANNERS SERIOUSLY UNDERESTIMATED THE COST AND COMPLEXITY OF THE PROJECT. ATTS ON COMPUTERS AND CONTROL SYSTEMS MIGHT HAVE ORIENTED THE SYRIAN PLANNERS TOWARD A MORE REALISTIC PROJECT, AS WELL AS GIVEN US FIRMS THE ADVANTAGE IN BIDDING. WE RECOMMEND SUCH A TTS, AS SYRIAN PLANS IN PETROLEUM, CHEMICALS, IRRIGATION, TRANSPORTATION AND MINING WILL DEMAND MORE AND MORE AUTOMATED CONTROL SYSTEMS). IN THIS CONTEXT, WE WOULD LIKE TO SECOND EMBASSY KUWAIT'S SUGGESTION (KUWAIT 2903) THAT US TRADE ASSOCIATION OFFICIALS VISIT MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES TO EXPLORE THE LOCAL MARKETS AND INFORM US SUPPLIERS FOR FOLLOWUP.

5. US FAIRS AND EXHIBITIONS: ALTHOUGH EMBASSY HAS FAITHFULLY DISTRIBUTED LITERATURE RECEIVED FROM USDOC/ DIBA ADVERTISING US TRADE FIARS AND EXHIBITIONS, SYRIAN RESPONSE HAS BEEN DISAPPOINTING. WE WILL CONTINUE EFFORTS, BUT SUGGEST THAT SUCH LITERATURE BE PRINTED IN ARABIC (PRESENTLY IN ENGLISH, SPANISH, FRENCH, GERMAN, AND JAPANESE) AND THAT USDOC, TRADE ASSOCIATIONS, AND/OR EXHIBITION SPONSORS CONSIDER AT LEAST PARTIAL FUNDING OF OVERSEAS VISITORS REPRESENTING THEIR GOVERNMENTS (AS OPPOSED TO PRIVATE OVERSEAS BUSINESSMEN).

6. BUSINESS VISITORS AND OFFICIAL MISSIONS TO SYRIA SHOULD AVOID RAMADAN, FRIDAYS (OR AT LEAST NOT SCHEDULE WORKDAYS ON FRIDAYS), AND THE PERIOD OF THE DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL FAIR. SCHEDULE OF SYRIAN HOLIDAYS DURING FY 78 FOLLOWS:

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1977: NOVEMBER 20-23: AL-ADHA FEAST, DEC 10: AL-HIJRA (MUSLIM NEW YEAR), DEC 25: CHRISTMAS; 1978: JAN 1: NEW YEARS DAY, MARCH 8: REVOLUTION DAY, APRIL 18: LATIN EASTER, APRIL 25: ORTHODOX EASTER, SEPT 1: UNION DAY. DURING RAMADAN (AUG 2-31) GOVERNMENT OFFICES ARE OPEN BUT WORK IS SLOWED DOWN.

7. HOTEL SITUATION IN DAMASCUS REMAINS TIGHT, BUT SHOULD BE EASED BY OPENING OF NEW MERIDIEN HOTEL (SCHEDULED SEPTEMBER 1976) AND SHERATON (MUCH-DELAYED, BUT SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER 1976), WHICH TOGETHER WILL ADD 704 FIRST-CLASS ROOMS.

8. EMBASSY MARKET RESEARCH FACILITIES ARE LIMITED BUT SHOULD BE AUGMENTED IN NEAR FUTURE BY FILLING OF LOCAL

POSITION FOR ECONOMIC SPECIALIST WHO COULD HELP
IN THIS AREA. LIMITED LOCAL-HIRE MARKET ANALYSIS
CAPACITY AVAILABLE. MARKET RESEARCH IS IN ITS
INFANCY IN SYRIA, WHICH BADLY NEEDS TO DEVELOP THIS
RESOURCE. HERE IN FACT MIGHT BE AN IDEAL THEME FOR
A TECHNICAL TRAINING SEMINAR: INTRODUCING SOPHISTICATED
MARKET AND PROJECT ANALYSIS SYSTEMS TO SYRIAN PLANNERS AND
PERHAPS FOLLOWING UP WITH TRAINING IN THE US.
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